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SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE WILDLIFE RESCUE CENTER EDUCATES CHILDREN ON
WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Ref: STATE 49931

¶1. SUMMARY: Inspired by the Department-produced message by Jane Goodall to stem the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, Mission Manila invited Filipino youth to the Wildlife Rescue Center to hear about the U.S. and Philippine anti-wildlife trafficking initiatives. To celebrate World Environment Day, Post arranged for the Director of the Philippine Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau to teach 50 students about wild animal rescue, care, rehabilitation, and release. The students also toured the Wildlife Rescue Center, handled snakes and birds, and received coloring books on the illegal wildlife trade. END SUMMARY.

Background

¶2. For the second year, the Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science produced public service announcements for release on World Environment Day (reftel), featuring famous personalities to emphasize the U.S. commitment to curtail the illegal trade of wild animals and associated products. Since the Philippines is a major transit point for trafficked animals and products in Southeast Asia, the Philippine government shares U.S. interest in educating the public to decrease the demand for these animals and products.

Event Partners

¶3. The Philippines Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau operates the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Nature Center to house rescued animals and secure confiscated animal parts for evidence in trafficking cases. The lush center was a perfect setting for Post's June 5 World Environment Day event. The Wildlife Bureau does not advertise itself as a confiscated goods repository, and no press was present while Center personnel waited that day to receive 600 valuable elephant tusks seized by customs at the Port of Manila (septel).

¶4. The Center's volunteer group, MyZoo, gave tours of the holding facilities to students. The volunteer veterinarians help rescue illegally-traded wild animals from Philippine ports of entry, local pet shops, and individual owners and traders. The veterinarian explained that the ultimate goal is to release the wildlife to their natural environment, but that this is not always possible. For example, 20 Indonesian cockatoos were rejected by that country in 2003 after lengthy negotiations broke down due to an outbreak of avian influenza. The Center has cared for the birds since the 2002 confiscation.

¶5. The students came from the poorest slums in Manila through a non-governmental organization's program that provides educational and after-school activities for over 800 children living in a garbage dump and a cemetery. The program is partly funded by selling trash to junk shops, recycling paper and aluminum, and selling handbags and jewelry made from trash by students' parents. Some of these 'recycled accessories' were displayed for sale at the Wildlife Center on World Environment Day.

16. After the presentation and tour, EconOff gave the volunteers copies of the Jane Goodall public service announcements. In exchange, the veterinarian presented a package of anti-animal trafficking posters produced by the Philippine Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau. The details of event were posted on the Department's "Dipnote blog" on June 15 at <http://blogs.state.gov/> or can be accessed at <http://tinyurl.com/mze9or>. In addition, Post's Public Affairs Section placed the Goodall announcements on MTV and Second Avenue, Philippines.

KENNEY